

## Westleton Parish Council

Good afternoon. I am Andrew Turner, Chair of Westleton Parish Council.

Westleton is a village five miles north of Friston and Saxmundham and a mile inland from the coast. Westleton Parish Council supports the detailed representations submitted by the Parish and Town Councils which will bear the brunt of the construction, the traffic on their local B roads, the environmental destruction of the land surrounding their communities and the resultant physical infrastructure which will loom over their horizons.

Like those Parishes, Westleton is suffering the effects of the Sizewell C construction – notably, already a 45% increase in peak-time traffic through our village, the extraordinary change in our landscape as the diggers and chainsaws destroy the land and vegetation, the extra time we have to factor into journeys because of endless road closures and seemingly needless speed limits on the A12... I could go on...

The Suffolk Heritage Coast's natural environment is already being reshaped for the worse ... So our instinctive reaction to this Sea Link project is one of despair that we are due to suffer even more traffic, construction, inconvenience, and stress. And so we ask whether it is necessary? Sea Link will in effect be an extension cable from Suffolk to Kent. But what power is it planned to transmit? We understand that the Scottish Power windfarms' electricity can be transmitted over the existing pylon network. As too the power from SZC. So, Sea Link is being proposed in anticipation of planning approval for Lionlink and presumably other onshore electricity generating projects attracted by the National Grid connection hub at Friston. A well thought out strategic plan for the country's power needs would have Lionlink landfall at a brown field site near to its power's point of use. In this scenario, there is no need for Sea Link – and without Sea Link, potential onshore energy projects would then also be installed closer to their point of use. Consent for Sea Link opens the door for more infrastructure projects to be inappropriately and unnecessarily imposed on this small section of Suffolk coast at great cost to its residents and its landscape. Yet the applicant seems to dismiss concern of these cumulative impacts - its documents are a litany of explanations for why there are no or limited significant impacts anticipated. When you examine the broader context, it becomes clear that this is divorced from reality.

Ironically, the applicant quotes the Suffolk County Council Transport plan for 2025- 2040 to support its application. The plan outlines themes for Suffolk to reach net zero transport emissions by 2040. Three of the four themes are: strengthening Suffolk's economy; protecting and enhancing Suffolk's environment; and promoting and supporting the health and wellbeing of all people in Suffolk.

From Westleton Parish Council's perspective, this project will do none of these – rather, it will do the complete opposite:

**Will Sea Link strengthen Suffolk's economy?** No. A core component of the Suffolk Coast's economy is tourism. The Sizewell C construction is already expected to reduce significantly Suffolk's tourism industry so much of which is centred on this section of coast. The Sea Link project will simply compound the problem: if tourists *can* find accommodation which has not been converted to worker accommodation, they are unlikely to return after experiencing the traffic, the denied access to public rights of way, and the construction vistas. Conversely, Sea Link will generate few local jobs during construction, and by its own admission almost none for its operation.

**Will Sea Link protect and enhance Suffolk's environment?** No, it will turn a beautiful shingle beach and marshlands into a construction zone, it will require the destruction of vegetation to trench the cables and it will result in a 16 acre, 26 metre high building in a field between a small village and a market town. The applicant has assessed flood risks, but flood risk has changed in recent years and will likely worsen with time. This is environmental destruction, not protection. And when you consider that Lionlink – which creates the need for Sea Link - will follow and will require trenching over many more miles and require another huge building next to Sea Link's, it is simply extraordinary that this can be presented as anything other than environmental devastation. Mitigation is proposed, but it will be decades before these buildings are shielded by trees and so decades during which this landscape will be industrial and not rural.

**Will Sea Link promote and support health and wellbeing?** No. Sea Link – and then Lion Link, and then what ever follows - will only exacerbate the negative health and wellbeing impacts on our residents. Sadly, we know what to expect – Sizewell C works have accustomed us to the sudden disappearance of hedgerows and mature trees and appearance of bare fields and sand banks... Sea Link will do more of the same – it will generate traffic, noise and light pollution, and will leave a huge building completely inappropriate to its surroundings. And the applicant proposes 7 day working weeks... The health impacts of these changes possibly cannot be measured but they will be very real. The size of the demonstration outside the Maltings today is a clear indicator of residents' concern.

And what about the transport network itself which the County Council aims to make net zero by 2040? The additional 346 HGV journeys each day on the local roads are going to challenge that objective. And these are of course in addition to the Sizewell C and the Scottish Power traffic. And then add the traffic caused by Lionlink and other energy projects which have been drawn to the area by the Friston substation and facilitated by Sea Link... And what about road safety and safety generally? Emergency service vehicles will be slower to respond to emergencies in the village and in the case of ambulances, slower to get to the hospitals. What happens when an HGV accident blocks the road: emergency services' response times will be further jeopardized; and traffic will move to local roads - in fact, traffic is likely to move off the A12 to local roads to try to avoid the HGV congestion. The fact that the County Council is planning works to improve the A12 show that it is not suitable for the expected uplift in traffic volumes. But these works will

coincide with the traffic increases themselves resulting in even greater congestion and safety impacts.

We note that the B1125 which passes through Westleton is not a part of the HGV routing Plan, but will LGV and worker traffic coming from the north be allowed to use the road which is already a rat-run for Sizewell C LGVs and workers?

We appreciate that the grid needs updating to meet the changing energy generation options and energy demands. But it needs to be realised under a planning strategy which is proportionate in its consideration of needs, options and impacts. The fact that this project has been proposed suggests that a planning re-think is required because better options are possible and because the project cannot be considered in isolation – the cumulative environmental, economic and social impacts of all these energy projects must be fully considered together.

Thank you.